Insurance Scheme for beedi workers

2469. SHRI SUDARSHAN AKARAPU: Will the Minister of LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have any proposal to launch a Group Insurance Scheme for beedi workers;

(b) if so, the details thereof, and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI SIS RAM OLA): (a) to (c) A Group Insurance Scheme for the beedi workers is already; being implemented by the Government with effect from 1.4.1992 through the Life Insurance Corporation (LIC). All beedi workers holding Identity Cards (which are 40 lakh, approximately) are covered under this Scheme. The premium is equally shared by the Labour Welfare Organization and the Social Security Fund of India. The sum assured is Rs. 10,000/- in case of natural death and Rs. 25,000/- for accidental death.

Rural unemployment

2470. SHRIMATI BIMBA RAIKAR: Will the Minister of LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are taking a serious view of growing unemployment from 5.9 per cent in 1993-94 to 7.21 per cent in 2000-01 with rural unemployment needing to be tackled on war footing;

(b) whether this trend is related to stagnation in agriculture employment over the years; and

(c) to what extent the proposed Minimum Employment Guarantee Scheme is likely to alleviate the sufferings of the unemployed persons?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI SIS RAM OLA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Employment in agricultural sector on current daily status basis has remained at the level of around 19 crore during 1994 — 2000.

(c) Government have announced the scheme with **a** view to provide a legal guarantee for atleast 100 days of employment to begin with on

asset-creating public works programmes every year at minimum wages for atleast one able bodied person in every poor household. The scheme is expected to provide substantial employment opportunities for the unemployed persons.

Beedi workers in Chhattisgarh

2471. SHRIMATI MOHSINA KIDWAI: Will the Minister of LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that more than 50,000 families work in the multi-crore beedi industry in Chhattisgarh beedi producing belt;

(b) if so, whether despite the laws that govern this industry, the beedi workers are paid much less than the minimum wage and have no benefits and are constantly at risk of respiratory diseases;

(c) whether Government would make a health survey in the State and provide them with free medical care and ensure minimum wages; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI SIS RAM OLA): (a) There are about 20,000 identified beedi workers engaged in beedi industry in the Chhattisgarh State.

(b) to (d) The minimum wages fixed for beedi workers in Chhattisgarh are Rs. 66.60 per day. As per the Beedi and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act, 1966, the responsibility for enforcement of the provisions of the Act, including minimum wages, lies with the State Government. The Government have been implementing several welfare schemes for the beedi workers including Group Insurance, reimbursement of treatment cost for major diseases like heart by-pass surgery, kidney transplantation, cancer, TB, minor surgeries including maternity benefits. The Government have been insisting upon the State Governments to ensure the payment of minimum wages.